

September 20

Hosea 13:1: When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. 2: And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. 3: Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

The sinner and all our vain works are like the morning cloud, the dew, the chaff and the smoke of the chimney. They shall all pass away. But Christ is not so, nor are those who put their trust in him.

It was in the cloud that God gave the rainbow as a token of the covenant which God made with Noah after the flood. (Gen 9: 13-14, 16) Christ is the Cloud where God makes his everlasting covenant with his people. It was in the cloud where the glory of the Lord appeared before Israel. (Ex 16:10) The LORD descended in the cloud. (Ex 34: 5-8) Christ is that Cloud wherein the triune God descended among men, where we see the glory of God. The cloud led Israel through the wilderness and protected them. (Ex 13: 21; 14: 19-20) So Christ is the Cloud which covers, protects, leads and makes sure all God's covenant promises to those who trust him.

Also, man's righteousness is as dew, passing away. But God's blessings in Christ is dew of another kind. The dew of grace freely falls wherever God is pleased to send it, even as the dew upon the grass. His Word is life and sustenance to the believer like dew on the tender plant. (Deut 32: 1-3) As the dew accomplishes God's work upon the earth so his word never fails to accomplish his work among sinners. (Is 55: 10-11; 61: 11) Christ is the Dew from heaven which causes God's elect lilies to grow in newness of life, who gives us strong roots as the strong cedars in Lebanon, who makes the believer beautiful as the olive tree and fragrant to smell as the cedar. (Hos 14: 5-6)

Further, Christ compares sinners, who trust in their own works, to chaff. (Job 21: 18; Ps 1: 4) It is Christ who separates the wheat, his redeemed, from the chaff. (Mt 3: 12; Lu 3; 17) Christ makes us fruitful and full of life rather than dry and barren. (Php 1: 11)

Lastly, the sinner and our vain righteousness are compared to smoke out of the chimney which blows away. Yet, Christ's bride is a pillar of smoke which is "perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant." (SOS 3: 6) That merchant is Christ the Lord. His righteousness perfumes the believer as myrrh and frankincense. By faith, the believer rises up to God like smoke, perfumed in Christ's righteousness, therefore accepted of God.

Sinner has the Lord discovered to you that you and your works are but clouds, dew, chaff and smoke which the wind carries away with ease? Then heed the Lord's command. He even gives us the words to speak to him, "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us* graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee [Lord] the fatherless findeth mercy." (Hos 14: 1-2)